

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the present application in view of the foregoing amendments and in view of the reasons that follow.

This amendment adds, changes and/or deletes claims in this application. A detailed listing of all claims that are, or were, in the application, irrespective of whether the claim(s) remain under examination in the application, is presented, with an appropriate defined status identifier. Currently claims 9-13, 15-19, and 21-25 are pending.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 15, 22, and 23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite.

Claims 15 and 23 are rejected for reciting carbon in an amount of 0.05 to 1.0% while claims 9 and 13 recite graphite powder in an amount of 0.1 to 0.3%. Claims 15 and 23 have been amended to overcome this rejection.

Claim 22 is rejected as not further limiting the parent claim, which is claim 13. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

The Office appears to be confusing the heat treatment step recited in claim 22 with the sintering step recited in claim 13. Applicants note that the heat treatment step of claim 22 is an additional step to the steps recited in claim 13 and comprises “heat-treating the sintered compact.” (Emphasis added) In other words, the heat treatment step recited in claim 22 is performed after the sintering step recited in claim 13. For example, the heat treatment step of claim 22 can be performed to increase the surface hardness of the sintered body and improve strength of the sintered body. Claim 22 parallels claim 10.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that not only claims 9-13, 16-19, 21 24, and 25 but also claims 15, 22 and 23 are allowable.

For at least the reasons noted above, withdrawal of these rejections is respectfully requested.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants wish to thank the Office for indicating that claims 9-13, 16-19, 21, 24, and 25 contain allowable subject matter. Claims 9, 24 and 25 have been amended as to form.

Applicants believe that the present application is now in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check or credit card payment form being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extension under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

Respectfully submitted,

Date JUL 05 2006

By 

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